



Buzzwords ...

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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

In this issue ...

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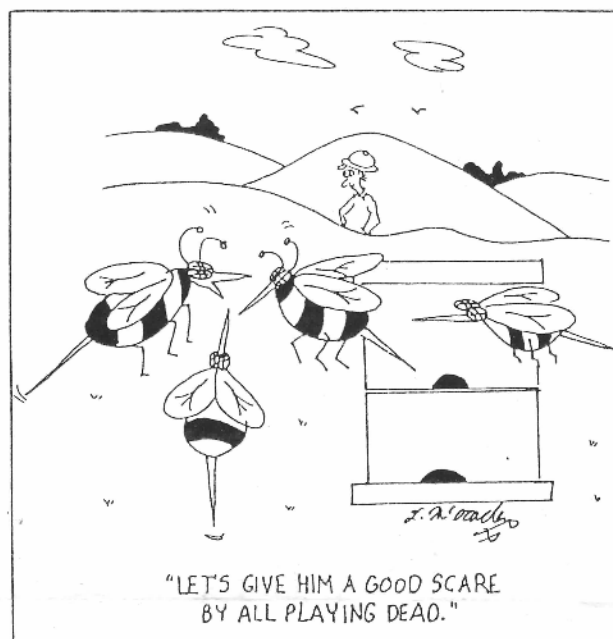
Conference Special Issue ...

- * Kidd confuses
- * Anderson reports
- * Honey promotion proposed



FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's only a matter of days since the end of conference, but I wanted to make sure I shared a few words with readers about this important annual event. To begin, let me thank the Marlborough branch for doing such a fine job in organising this year's conference. I would also like to thank all those beekeepers from around the country who made the effort to attend. I'm sure they will agree with me that the conference ended on a very positive note. I refer, of course, to the marketing investigation to be conducted by our seminar speaker, Bill Floyd. Special thanks to Steve Olds, Tecpak Plastics, for making a large donation to get the investigation under way. I understand that by the end of conference several more donations had been made by those in attendance. I hope the momentum for



a marketing programme grows. I believe such a programme is needed to remove the oversupply problems our industry faces at the present time.

I would also like to thank those members of our industry who took part in the NBA/MAF Exotic Pest and Disease consultation meeting on Friday. It is important to have a honey bee exotic pest and disease response programme in place in this country which is acceptable to all parts of our industry, should an emergency arise.

Finally, as your president for the coming year I would like to make a strong plea for all beekeepers to work together and communicate problems at the branch level. Remember - a problem shared is a problem halved.

Dudley Ward, NBA President

KIDD CONFUSES

Funding for AFB control has been on everyone's mind these past few months. Your executive made submissions to the Associate Minister of Agriculture and the Agriculture Caucus Committee during the month of May. But because a decision from the Beehive has not been forthcoming, and because a quick resolution of the matter is necessary to allow a thorough spring inspection programme to get under way, many beekeepers thought the conference address from a member of Parliament might be used by the government to make a final pronouncement.

The conference address was given by Mr. Doug Kidd, local MP and leader of the "Razor Gang" charged with cutting government spending. Given Mr. Kidd's reputation, receiving even a \$125,000 appropriation didn't seem likely, but many in the audience still felt that our industry's public service to the community in the form of unpaid pollination would help to win the day.

Mr. Kidd began by praising beekeepers for being part of the group of small businessmen "risk takers" he believes will be responsible for the export-led growth which will bring about economic recovery. He was a bit off the mark, though, when he pointed to increased honey production as a sign that beekeepers were making optimistic business decisions. His own researchers obviously hadn't briefed him on the low prices and surplus stocks currently facing the beekeeping industry.

When it came to the issue of government spending, however, Mr. Kidd talked very tough, indeed. According to Mr. Kidd, "this government is broke and operating in receivership mode." He and his cabinet colleagues had to make cuts in all areas of government spending, and would continue to do so until the economy once again began to pay its way through increased overseas trade. "In the future" Mr. Kidd said, "social and community services would come after success in trade."

Mr. Kidd apologised for the change to user pays in AFB control. He hadn't realised, he said, that as part of the Razor Gang he was responsible. According to Mr. Kidd, however, the AFB control programme changes were just part of the same philosophy cabinet used in determining funding of other government services. That philosophy states that whenever a government activity affects commercial success, the activity must either be taken over by industry, or paid for by industry members.

He also recognised, though, that in our case the Commodities Levy mechanism was not efficient because the administrative costs were so high. He said there must be a better way and pledged to make his staff available in an effort to find a less costly solution.

Mr. Kidd ended his speech leaving most people in the room in no doubt that the AFB programme would have to be self-funded, in one form or another. What followed in question time, however, made the issue far more unclear.

Mr. Kidd was certainly unreceptive to a suggestion from the floor that the government, on behalf of the country, should

provide the AFB control programme as a small payment for the millions of dollars of unpaid pollination our industry provides. His reply was - "You're having me on, aren't you. You'll have to cash up on this in a market environment." Mr. Kidd couldn't, however, offer any practical suggestions as to how this should be done other than to charge farmers.

And then someone asked Mr. Kidd whether in fact a decision on government funding of the programme had actually been made. His answer left a big question mark hanging over the rest of conference. "We haven't decided," he said. "That is an administrative matter. It will come about in good time after the budget is announced."

The only conclusion one could draw from his statement is that, once again, the industry will have to wait.

HEARD AT CONFERENCE

"Do I have speaking rights, Mr. Chairman? No, but we'd like to hear your opinions."

"I realise the MAF can't do anything about the weather, but maybe the NBA should address the issue."

"Devaluation is pretending to be rich without being productive."

"Due to severe financial restraints, the light at the end of the tunnel has been turned off."

HIVE LEVIES (AGAIN)

We reported in the June issue of *Buzzwords* that 160 beekeepers had still not paid their hive levy. Thanks to late payments by a number of beekeepers that figure has now been halved, but members should be aware that the remaining defaulters will not be overlooked. As required by law, registered letters will be sent to those concerned in early August. Failure to respond in the time prescribed will result in action being taken by the NBA solicitor.

NBA Executive

DENIS FLIES IN

Denis Anderson, former honey bee pathologist with DSIR, and now a researcher with the CSIRO in Canberra, found time in his busy schedule to make a presentation on the final day of conference. Denis flew over from Australia but was almost stranded at Wellington airport. He is also still suffering from a bout of malaria.

Denis spoke primarily on the work he is conducting on queen bee diseases. This work is being funded by the Australian government, the Australian Queen Producers Association, and the NZ Honey Industry Trust Fund.

The most interesting results are those related to Halfmoon Syndrome. Denis has been studying this malady for a number of years now, and although he first thought it might be a brood disease (the dead larva look just like EFB), he later identified the source of the problem as the queen.



Recently he has begun studying queen supersedure and has found that most of the symptoms associated with Halfmoon Syndrome (clumped eggs, spotty brood, dead c-shaped larva, and drone brood in worker cells) are also produced during the normal supersedure process. The difference seems to be that in Halfmoon Syndrome queens undergo premature aging. Such queens lose control of egg laying, but because they are young in age they look healthy (good size, bright colour, good hair cover). Colonies sometimes try to supersede these queens but seldom succeed because the syndrome also seems to affect the eggs chosen for queen raising.

After looking at a number of queen mating yards in both Australia and New Zealand, Denis now believes that this premature aging is the result of nutritional problems in the mating nuc during the first week of the queen's adult life. Unless queens are fed adequate amounts of royal jelly during this time, poor development is likely to take place in the queen's fat bodies and other tissues. There may even be reduced levels of juvenile hormone. Juvenile hormone has been found to be involved in the control of egg production in some insects.

Denis is now studying the relationship between the number of nurse bees and later performance of the queen. He hopes to be able to determine the population of these 3 to 10 day old bees needed in a mating nuc to ensure proper adult queen development. In the meantime he suggests that mating nucs should be kept strong and run on a 21 day mating cycle.



Denis also gave a brief run-down on his survey work in Papua New Guinea (that's where he got the malaria). Denis is following the spread of *Apis cerana*, which is believed to have crossed the PNG-Irian Jaya border in the mid '80's. Denis is also following the movements of the two external mites, *Varroa jacobsoni* and *Tropilaelaps clareae*, which were first found in PNG in West Sepik Province (north coast border with Irian Jaya) in 1985. *Apis cerana* has now moved as far as Madang on the north coast and is in Mendi, in Southern Highlands Province. This is not far from the commercial beekeeping areas of Eastern and Western Highlands Provinces.

Denis has found that *Apis cerana* has carried *Varroa* to both of these areas, but seemingly not *Tropilaelaps*. *Tropilaelaps* is found on *Apis cerana* in both South East Asia and India, but this is the second time Denis hasn't found the mite on that species of bee in PNG. *Tropilaelaps* seems to be about 12 months behind the front of both *Apis cerana* and *Varroa*, and is found only in *Apis mellifera* colonies. The mite is deadly, though, and according to Denis is likely to kill most of the *Apis mellifera* colonies in PNG unless a drug treatment programme is initiated soon.

MARKETING INVESTIGATION

One of the most interesting speakers at this year's conference was Bill Floyd, a marketing consultant from Marlborough. In the past many people in the industry have downplayed the idea of a marketing plan for honey, believing that little impact is possible unless large amounts of money are spent on television advertising. Bill Floyd's presentation cut through such talk. He was able to show how honey could be marketed using a number of low-cost, high impact ideas and from the discussion following the seminar it was obvious that a number of the "doubters" had definitely changed their minds.

Bill calls his approach "Judo Marketing" and drew an analogy with the judo wrestler who uses the weight of his opponent to his advantage when making a move. Honey producers, according to Bill, should do the same. Rather than fighting against the big boys we should use their size to our advantage and ensure that honey is used in manufactured products and product promotions.

Bill Floyd's message certainly got through. So much so in fact that during the later stages of conference a marketing investigation was proposed, using Bill's services, to see what opportunities exist for a coordinated plan for honey promotion. The Americans have made great strides in this area in the last several years and have increased consumption (mostly through industrial use) by approximately 10%.

Steve Olds from Tekpak Plastics, DUNEDIN, maker of the innovative Safe-t-Pak plastic pottle, got the ball rolling by making a large donation to the investigation project. And by the end of conference a number of other people in attendance had also put money forward. For the project to succeed, however, more money is needed. So if you've been complaining recently about the lack of honey promotion, here's your chance to do something about it. Send a cheque to the Honey Promotions Fund, c/- Secretary, National Beekeepers Association, PO Box 4048, WELLINGTON.

NBA Executive

ORGANIC HONEY OPPORTUNITY

The organic movement really has come a long way. It wasn't so long ago when the word "organic" was associated with just a small, health-conscious (some would even say "fringe") group in society. But now the pollution in western industrial societies together with the Chernobyl nuclear disaster has heightened public opinion to the need for non-contaminated foods. At the same time many people are also becoming aware of the high costs of intensive, chemical based food production and the ecological damage that results.

And as you would expect, this new respectability in things "organic" has translated into a significant growth market for organic products. Surveys in both the US and the UK have recently shown that more than half of consumers are prepared to pay a premium for organically produced food. And a recent article in *New Zealand Marketing* magazine

predicts that based on those overseas trends this country could stand to gain an additional \$2.34 billion in export earnings from markets which are demanding organically grown food.

The problem for many land-based industries in New Zealand, however, is that before they can begin to supply the organic market, fundamental changes in production and processing will have to take place.

The beekeeping industry is much more fortunate. Its products have always had a "pure and natural" consumer image and relatively few management changes are required to give these products a certified "organic" status. New Zealand beekeepers are therefore in an enviable position to take immediate advantage of this increasing global market.

The NBA executive identified organics as a significant new business opportunity in its most recent strategic analysis of the beekeeping industry and set itself clear objectives to research the organics market. As part of that research, the NBA executive commissioned MAF Quality Management to prepare a report on organic certification options.

That report, entitled "A Comparison of Standards for New Zealand Organic Honey" is now available from NBA head office, PO Box 4048, WELLINGTON, at a cost of \$5 (payment with order please). Executive is also considering adopting a NBA organic honey standard which could be used to certify organic honey for the domestic and overseas market.

NBA Executive

BRANCH NOTES

Hawkes Bay, one of the most active branches in the country, sends us some spring news which they would like to share. Tuesday, August 13, they will be holding a branch meeting where the conference will be discussed. Then on Saturday, August 17, a working bee will be held at the branch apiary. The branch plans to erect a screen fence on the day to "protect observers". On Tuesday, September 10, John Dobson will share a few secrets about bee genetics and queen rearing at the branch meeting, and on Saturday, September 21, a spring inspection of the branch apiary is scheduled. Visitors are welcome to all events. Branch meetings are at the Polytech at 7:30 pm. The branch apiary is on Pakowhai Road just south of the Ngaruroro River.

The **Christchurch** Hobbyist Beekeepers Club has kindly sent along a copy of their July newsletter. The club is very active, with 83 members, but seems to be having trouble getting people to come to the AGM (sound familiar?). The club has field days scheduled for August 3, September 7, October 5, and November 2. Meeting time is 1:30 pm at the club site, 681 Cashmere Road.

The **Auckland** branch will be holding its next meeting at the St. Hilda's Church Hall, 12 Youngs Road, Penrose, on August 29 at 7:30 pm. The agenda includes a conference report, general business, and disease inspection planning with Derek Bettesworth, AAO, Whangarei.

The next **Bay of Plenty** branch activity is a Bee Disease Field Day, to be held Monday, August 12 at the Bay of Plenty Polytech. Starting time is 1 pm. The field day will include practical demonstrations, a bee diseases slide show, and a presentation by Dr. Mark Goodwin, MAF Ruakura, on his research into AFB. Beekeepers are especially requested to bring their staff along to the day. A general meeting will also be held at the same venue at 7 pm. Agenda includes planning for spring diseaseathons.

Beekeepers in the **South Island** are invited to attend a big winter seminar at Telford Rural Polytechnic, August 5-6. Topics (and speakers) include queen and package production (Mervyn Cloake), queen quality research (Reg Clarke), honey exporting (Peter Bray and Percy Berry), floral source honey production (Alan McCaw) and marketing (Leslie McKenzie). Registration fee is \$20 per day and meals and accommodation are available.

The **Southern North Island** branch will hold its post-conference meeting at the Wanganui National Party rooms on Friday, August 23 at 10 am. The theme for the meeting will be "Making Beekeeping More Profitable in the 1990's". A panel of speakers will discuss a range of topics covered at conference.

OGDEN SHIFTS

Stephen Ogden, South Island Apiculture Services Manager, MAFQual, has just completed shifting his office to Lincoln. His new address and phone number is:

Plant Protection Centre
MAF Quality Management
PO Box 24
LINCOLN
Phone (03) 325 3011
Fax (03) 325 3023

Stephen's home phone number (as of 22 July) is (03) 359 8602.

MAF Quality Management

BUZZWORDS IS ...

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The views expressed in *Buzzwords* are not necessarily those of the National Beekeepers' Association nor of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

